

NOVEMBER 6, 1976

CUBA AND PUERTO RICO -- TWO ELECTIONS

ANNCR: NEWS ANALYST FRED GALVAN DISCUSSES TWO ELECTIONS--ONE IN CUBA AND THE OTHER IN PUERTO RICO--WHICH OFFER SOME INTERESTING CONTRASTS.

VOICE: EARLY NEXT MONTH (DECEMBER SECOND) CUBA'S FIRST NATIONAL PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY MEETS TO REORGANIZE THE ISLAND'S GOVERNMENT--UP TO A POINT -- TO APPROVE A MODIFIED VERSION OF ITS FIVE-YEAR ECONOMIC PLAN AND TO PUT A NEW CONSTITUTION INTO EFFECT. THE ASSEMBLY WAS CHOSEN IN ISLAND-WIDE ELECTIONS CONVOKED BY THE CASTRO REGIME--THE FIRST ELECTIONS SINCE IT CAME TO POWER IN 1959. THE ELECTIONS WERE CALLED FOR BY THE FIRST CONGRESS OF CUBA'S COMMUNIST PARTY LAST DECEMBER.

WHILE PRESENTED TO THE CUBAN PEOPLE AS THE CASTRO REGIME'S OSTENSIBLE EFFORT TO BROADEN THE PEOPLE'S AUTHORITY IN THE CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, IT IS AN OPEN QUESTION WHETHER THE NEW INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CUBA'S GOVERNMENT WILL ACTUALLY DO THIS. FOR THE NEW CONSTITUTION IN EFFECT TIGHTENS THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY WITHOUT, HOWEVER, IMPAIRING THE AUTHORITY OF FIDEL CASTRO OR HIS CLOSE COLLEAGUES IN THE GOVERNMENT.

(OPT) FIDEL CASTRO WILL BECOME CHIEF OF STATE IN DECEMBER, WHILE RETAINING HIS PRESENT POSTS OF MILITARY COMMANDER IN CHIEF AND PARTY LEADER. IN FACT, VERY LITTLE WILL CHANGE. THE NEW CONSTITUTION IS DESIGNED TO PERPETUATE COMMUNIST PARTY CONTROL OVER CUBA ONCE ITS PRESENT LEADERSHIP IS GONE.
(END OPT)

IN THE OCTOBER ELECTIONS IN CUBA THERE WERE NO PARTIES COMPETING AGAINST THE COMMUNISTS. WHILE PARTY MEMBERSHIP WAS NOT

A REQUISITE FOR ELECTION, THE RESULTS SHOW THAT THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THOSE ELECTED WERE COMMUNISTS. THE OTHERS BELONG TO CUBA'S REGIME-CONTROLLED MASS ORGANIZATIONS OF WORKERS AND PEASANTS.

IN THE SECOND RECENT ELECTION IN THE CARIBBEAN AREA THE PICTURE IS DIFFERENT. IN PUERTO RICO, ITS VOTERS THIS WEEK (NOVEMBER SECOND) PRODUCED AN UPSET. THEY CHOSE A NEW GOVERNOR REPRESENTING THE STATEHOOD PARTY OVER THE INCUMBENT WHO RAN AS THE CANDIDATE OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARTY. THE STATEHOOD PARTY HAS LINKS WITH THE REPUBLICANS A ON THE U.S. MAINLAND, WHILE THE COMMONWEALTH PARTY IS LINKED TO THE DEMOCRATS. TWO OTHER PARTIES -- BOTH REPRESENTING PUERTO RICO'S INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT--ROLLED UP LESS THAN SIX PERCENT OF THE VOTES. THE SMALLER OF THEM, WITH CLOSE TIES TO HAVANA, POLLED LESS THAN ONE PERCENT. IN ANY CASE, PUERTO RICO'S VOTERS, AS IN PAST ELECTIONS FOR GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATIVE AND MUNICIPAL OFFICERS, WERE PROVIDED WITH THREE CHOICES.

THE ISSUE IN THIS YEAR'S ELECTION WAS NOT THE ISLAND'S POLITICAL STATUS--AN ISSUE THAT CAN ONLY BE SETTLED BY A SPECIAL REFERENDUM. WHAT MOVED PUERTO RICAN VOTERS THIS YEAR WAS THE ISLAND'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS--AN ISSUE ON WHICH THE STATEHOOD PARTY PROMISED A CHANGE. THE FACT THAT THE INDEPENDENCE CANDIDATES ATTRACTED SO FEW VOTES SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT THEIR ACCEPTABILITY AMONG THE PUERTO RICAN PEOPLE.

IN ANY CASE, AS THE NEW YORK TIMES NOTES IN COMMENTING ON THE PUERTO RICAN VOTING, "FOR THE FIFTH STRAIGHT QUADRENNIAL ELECTION, WELL OVER NINETY PERCENT OF PUERTO RICO'S VOTERS HAVE SUPPORTED THE PARTIES THAT FAVOR PERMANENT UNION WITH THE UNITED STATES."

AND BOTH ELECTIONS, THE CUBAN AND THE PUERTO RICAN, SAY
A GOOD DEAL TO THOSE WHO FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS HAVE GONE ALONG
WITH CUBAN EFFORTS AT THE U.N. AND OTHER WORLD FORUMS TO RAISE
THE ISSUE OF PUERTO RICO'S SELF-DETERMINATION.

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